1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

131
133
487

FIG. 1. Map of the Cassiar and Adjacent Area.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

cabin, bunkhouse, and the residences of sons-in-law. From here the people go out to hunt, fish, and trap from early fall to late spring. Such a settlement is generally identified with its oldest resident, who lives here with his family and anyone else who has been invited or accepted to trap on the owner's trap line. Due to the long period in which brush and firewood have been gathered around most settlements, the surrounding area is generally well cleared and presents a spacious open appearance in the otherwise forested environment. An attempt is made to keep the immediate environs of a settlement free of willow and other brush (see Fig. 3).

As has already been pointed out, the structures in a settlement are arranged without regard to pattern. Generally they are on one side of a worn and narrow path which skirts the river. From the settlement, trails radiate to other settlements, to Lower Post, and to the trap line. It is not unusual for settlements to be moved a short distance up or downstream and even across the river. Such moving probably occurs when the wood supply in a vicinity becomes exhausted.

Garbage and slop, which is not fed to dogs, is commonly poured over the cutbank. Behind the settlement, in the toilet brush, one encounters piles of moosehair and discarded clothing.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

The most important of the exploitative activities discussed—hunting and trapping—can be efficiently carried on only after the people have moved from the relatively populous trading center to the isolated winter settlements. Here it is once more necessary for each family to spread out across the surrounding country to intercept game and fur. Since a considerable portion of the resources derived from the environment are not directly consumed, but are exchanged for traders' food and capital goods, movement back to the trading post is also essential. In brief, Kaska society is, by adaptive necessity, extremely dependent upon mobility.

Two types of travel and transportation may be distinguished for the Indians, long distance and local movement. The first type includes the movement of people with their furs and belongings to Lower Post and their return to the winter homes with food and other supplies. The distance involved in such travel varies, depending on the tribal district and the location of the winter settlement within it. Generally in this form of transportation, goods must be hauled from fifteen to seventy miles. The second type, local movement, designates the mobility of people and goods taking place within the tribal district. Such local travel includes the movement of persons from the settlements to temporary hunting and trap line camps, to fishing sites, and to neighboring winter settlements.

In order to avoid the needless duplication of the words "travel and transportation" it may be pointed out that practically all travel involves the simultaneous transportation of goods. Similarly transportation cannot be accomplished without travel by the owner or his representative. In general a person rarely undertakes more than a day's travel without company.

Summer travel is carried out over trails and rivers. In winter people generally travel over trails, although they also utilize the frozen surfaces of rivers and lakes. Summer trails are

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

generally narrow, cleared only enough to permit the transit of dogs and people traveling in single file. Winter trails are better cleared and cut wider, in order to accommodate loaded toboggans and people on snowshoes. Travelers in summer may follow part of a winter trail, but generally the latter are direct routes while in summer people must bypass lakes, sloughs, and the bends of rivers.

Both summer and winter trails are marked by blazed trees which, in a well wooded area, are spaced about a hundred feet apart. In addition, men who are hunting in an unfamiliar region may make temporary blazes to guide them on their return to camp or on a subsequent visit to a meat cache. Temporary blazing consists of breaking willow branches in the direction taken. Sometimes a forked stick is planted in soft ground and another thin pole laid in the fork to point direction. In early fall, a safe crossing on newly formed ice may be marked by three or four foot long poles stuck in the snow.

Trails usually follow the contour of a country. They never adhere to the meandering courses of rivers but always portage across points of land or, in winter, arms of water, in order to save distance. A trail usually ascends a ridge diagonally rather than proceeding straight up the face. In winter, the open face of such a diagonal ascent may be bulwarked with small black spruce trees laid lengthwise along the trail. Such a bulwark guards a toboggan from sliding down the otherwise open hillside. Spruce poles, roughly trimmed of brush, may also be extended from an ascent into the branches of trees growing below the trail. Such poles are placed about four feet apart and also serve to prevent a vehicle from overturning, should it slip from the ridge. Further protection is achieved by banking ascents with snow which is kicked from the overhanging slope with snowshoes.

Windfalls are removed from winter trails if they are small enough to cut with an ax and light enough to lift aside. Otherwise fallen timber may be axed in half and pushed down into the snow. When a heavy windfall blocks a trail, small sticks and snow are kicked up to make an embankment, on which the toboggan can pass over the obstacle, or else the vehicle is lifted across the block. Winter trails are maintained by whoever uses them. A man making his first trip to the trap line in autumn will cut whatever overhanging branches and windfalls obstruct his passage. With the first snow he will bulwark ascents to ridges and cut more brush. Anyone else using the trail is free to benefit from these improvements.

In summer, trails cross small creeks by means of bridges constructed by felling from one to three trees, four or five inches in diameter, across the stream. These are trimmed of branches and moved close together. Bridges are also constructed by throwing down four or five saplings, two or three inches in diameter. Large rivers are crossed by rafts.

Many points along trails and rivers are designated by place names. Such identifications are freely coined and usually originate from some outstanding feature of the site or from some memorable event associated with that place. Thus a long ridge overlooking a wide stretch of country is called See the Country. A lake is known as Excited Lake, Old Man explained, because "People come there. They stay one night. They don't know how to go on, go back, or cross the mountain. Talking, talking; finally fighting [arguing] going on. They turn back." River Joe calls a slough below his winter settlement by the name of his daughter, who was born there in a temporary camp. An island in the Liard River is known as Natsitsi ("Long Face") Island. Natsitsi was one of Old Man's dogs. One year, as the family was

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

131
631
491
487
764

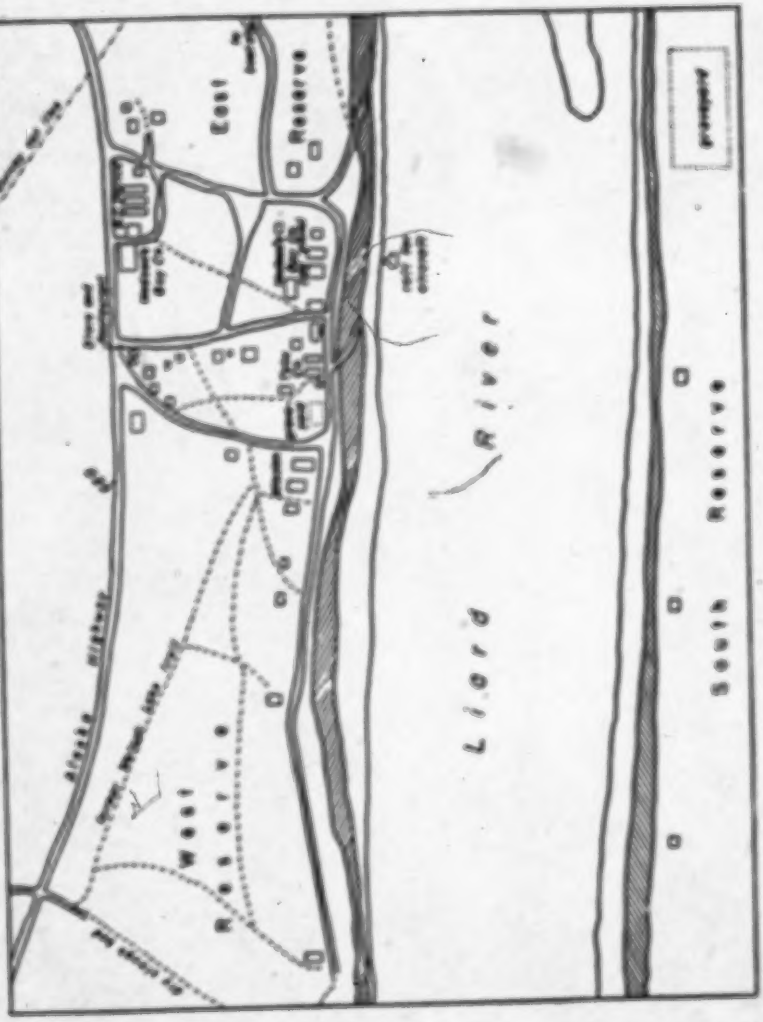

Fig. 3. Plan of Lower Post, showing Indian Reserves.

2: Teit E-5 (1912-1915) 1917
ND12 Nahane ND12

101 Both tribes live
[224] chiefly by hunting and trapping, but the Kaska depend more on the
136 chase than do the Tahltan. Large game-animals are abundant, consisting of moose, caribou, sheep, goat, and bear. Marmots are plentiful in certain parts, and buffalo are said to have been fairly numerous at one time in the more eastern sections of the country.

101 The Kaska are entirely surrounded by Athapascan tribes, while the Tahltan are neighbors of tribes of two other stocks; viz., the Tlingit to the northwest and west, and the Niska and Kitksan tribes of the Tsimshian stock to the southwest. To the south the Sikani, Carrier, and Chilcotin tribes of the Athapascan stock separate the Tahltan and Kaska from the Shuswap and Lillooet, the nearest tribes of the
439 interior Salish. Owing largely to their position, the Tahltan had a great deal of intercourse with the Tlingit, much more than with any
● 487 other people. Intercourse and trading were chiefly by way of Stikine River. Trade was in the hands of the Tlingit of Wrangell and vicinity, who annually transported goods by canoe up the river to the head of canoe navigation, a little above Telegraph Creek and close to the headquarters of the Tahltan. The people of the latter tribe acted as middlemen in passing coast products inland, and inland products coastward. The main trade-route between the far east (the Mackenzie valley and the plains) and the Pacific coast in this part of British Columbia lay through the Tahltan and Kaska territory, and there is evidence of a number of cultural features having penetrated a long distance in both directions along that route. Here, as in other parts of the west, the main trade-routes lay as nearly east and west as the physical features of the country allowed; while other routes running north and south within the interior were unimportant, notwithstanding the fact that the nature of the country generally was favorable for travel and intercourse.

487 It may be expected that dissemination of tales has occurred chiefly
177 along the main trade-routes, where intercourse between the tribes was
X 171 most frequent and closest. Hence throughout the interior, dissemination of tales has followed east and west lines rather than north and
773 south. As the same conditions as to routes prevailed in the southern interior as in the northern, it seems probable that a number of the incidents in tales of the Tahltan and Kaska which correspond with those in tales of the interior Salish have not passed directly from Athapascan to Salish tribes, or *vice versâ*, but have reached both from the same eastern and western sources,—chiefly, it seems, the latter.

177 The Tahltan assert that in the old trading-rendezvous on the upper
X 171 Stikine, members of the two tribes associated there for weeks together,
773 and that one of the features of meeting was story-telling. Tahltan *raconteurs* told their stories one day, and Tlingit told theirs the following day. Sometimes they thus told stories turn about for

Interior Indians and the White traders of the coast; it is said for many decades they made handsome profits. For a long /time/ they resented any interference from whites or others in their trade monopoly and opposed in every possible way the establishment of trading posts within their trading range in the Interior. Only with the rush of miners to the Cassiar gold fields in 1874-1876 was the Tlingit monopoly broken up. At this time several thousands of Whites poured into the country overland from the south as well as up the Stikine from the Coast, and numerous trading establishments sprang up in the Tahltan and Kaska countries and White traders have controlled the trade ever since. The Tahltan traded almost exclusively with the Tlingit and the Kaska. There was hardly any trade with tribes to the north and south. As in other parts of British Columbia and the Pacific slope all the main arteries of trade ran east and west across the mountain ranges and not north and south between them. All of them reached across both the Cascades and Rockies, thus connecting the Pacific coast with the Plains. The main trade route in the Cassiar Region passed up the Stikine River to the Tahltan, thence across country to Dease Lake and to the Kaska on Dease River, thence following the Liard to the Mackenzie. A branch crossed Tahltan country to the Liard at the mouth of the Rancheria, its influence extending north and east. A trade route of some importance skirted Tahltan territory on the north. It followed the Taku and Nakina Rivers across the Teslin Lake, where it divided, one branch going up to the Nisutlin and over to the head of the Liard, and the other or main branch going down the Teslin River. This route however was not important to the Tahltan. There appears to have been little trade into the eastern interior by way of the Nass and Skeena River, or at least it did not extend north or effect the Tahltan and Kaska. The Tahltan acted as middlemen between the Tlingit and Kaska.

Goods were transported on backs on /sic, to the?/ Rancheria River and also to the head of Dease Lake, then by trail or canoe to the Kaska at the foot of the lake or beyond to McDames; rendez-vous was nine miles above Telegraph.

The Tlingit traders brought their goods in canoes up the Stikine to above Telegraph Creek. The canoes used were mostly large sea-going canoes capable of carrying several tons weight. They took from one to two weeks to make the trip of over 160 miles up

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

at Pine Rapids. Above McDame the river passes west of the Horseranch Mountains, a spur of the Cassiar Range. The more rugged features of the district are somewhat softened at the confluence of the Dease and Liard rivers, the site of Lower Post. It is this region, actually extending westward from Smith River to Watson Lake, which Williams has described as "a rolling plateau deeply covered with sand and gravel, and varied by low rounded hills and deep, well forested stream valleys."[4] Bisecting the Cassiar from north to south is the so-called Rocky Mountain Trench, one of the proposed routes for the Alaska Highway that has also been surveyed from Prince George to Watson Lake for a railroad. The survey line can still be followed and crosses the Alaska Highway a few hundred feet east of Lower Post.[5]

The Cassiar is drained by several large rivers including, from west to east, the Frances, Dease, Hyland, Kechika (Muddy), Coal, Rock, and Smith. The lower reaches of the Kechika or Muddy River are sometimes referred to as the Turnagain or Black River. All of these run into the easterly flowing Liard, which in turn enters the Mackenzie at Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, whose waters finally reach the Arctic Ocean. In spring and early summer the streams are swift and deep. Toward autumn the water level recedes considerably but the numerous rapids always render river navigation difficult and sometimes hazardous. "Rising in the elevated country west of the Rocky Mountains, the Liard falls rapidly toward the east, the difference in elevation between the mouth of the Dease and the Mackenzie amounting to nearly 1,630 feet, and is characterized nearly everywhere by impetuous currents, by dangerous rapids and narrow whirlpool cañons."[6] About 50 miles below Lower Post is Hell's Gate, the most famous of the Liard's rapids. Here the river runs its tortuous route through the barrier of the Rockies. The spring break-up of the frozen Liard is reported to be particularly spectacular in this canyon where huge slabs of ice pile up with pressure increasing behind them until, with a terrific roar that can be heard for miles, the mass gives way and charges through the narrow, cavelike opening. The difficulties associated with water transportation up the Liard from Fort Simpson were largely responsible for the abandonment, in 1865, of Fort Halkett, the Hudson's Bay Company post at the confluence of the Liard and Smith rivers (Fig. 2). Since that date the principal means of access to the Cassiar has been from the south, travelers, among whom gold seekers occupied a prominent place, journeying up the Stikine River from Wrangell, Alaska, to Telegraph Creek, B. C. From here they crossed the height of land to reach the foot of Dease Lake, 200 miles south of Lower Post. By 1946 this route was rapidly falling into abeyance as the Alaska Highway provided a new and modern means of access.

The climate of the intermontane Cassiar is seasonally variable. In summer, as elsewhere in the northern forest, the days are hot and temperatures reach 90 degrees in the

[4] Williams, *Geological Reconnaissance along the Alaska Highway from Fort Nelson, British Columbia, to Watson Lake, Yukon* (1944), 2. See also McConnell, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon and Mackenzie Basins* (1890), 40.

[5] In 1950 the New York newspapers reported fresh talk of a proposed railroad to extend from Prince George to Fairbanks, Alaska, passing through Lower Post.

[6] McConnell, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon and Mackenzie Basins* (1890), 34D.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

forward crampiron, came up from below and knit across the 20-7 strand from above (27), knit across the forward crampiron from above (28), then twisted three times around the 3-14 strand between the forward crampiron and the 20-7 strand, and twisted around the 20-7 strand enroute to the left hand frame, where the line knotted at station 29 with a single overhand knot that included one part of the 20-7 strand.

Two types of harness, both made from smoked-skin line, secured the snowshoe to the mountain-covered foot. One of these is said to have been introduced into the area from Fort Liard and is currently referred to as the "Nelson type" (Fig. 4, CENTER SKETCH). The other was in use among the Liard River and "Tlingit" (probably Taku) people (Fig. 4, LOWER SKETCH).

To avoid slipping on steep inclines four bone pins were sometimes inserted into holes provided at the bottom of each snowshoe. The pins projected about an inch from the wood. The snowshoe staff further aided walking in hilly country. It consisted of a stick about four feet long with a hoop that was laced with babiche line. The hoop was located a short distance from the lower end of the staff and consisted of a short length of willow bent and lashed in the form of a circle. The filling served to keep the hoop affixed to the staff. A man prepared wood for this implement while women customarily added the filling. No distinctive name for the snowshoe staff could be learned, informants designating it merely as "walking stick." Morice, however, has translated the Carrier name for this implement as referring to the "circular attachment which prevents it [the staff] from sinking too much in the snow."[9] Men wore snow glasses when traveling across snow made bright by the spring sun. These implements consisted of strips of tanned skin or birch bark provided with eye slits. The area around the slits was blackened with charcoal to further reduce glare.

Land travel in summer or winter generally involved men walking in advance of the women, who remained in charge of children and household goods. This pattern left men free to intercept or follow game, reduced disturbance that might drive away game, and also enabled men to prepare sufficient wood for a comfortable camp before the women arrived. Sometimes women and children did not reach a camp until midnight. In autumn, enroute to the ground-hog trapping grounds in the mountains, a number of families moved together, the men scouting for moose and the women walking in old and well-defined trails. People crossed streams on rafts as well as on log bridges constructed by felling either one, two, or three thin trees or by shifting an already fallen tree into position to serve as a span. In traveling to a game kill, as well as in other types of cross country movement, Indians sometimes indicated their route by blazes. One type of blaze consisted of a willow or other branch broken in the specified direction. In an "open place" the route might be indicated by hanging moss in trees, while up in the barren mountain tundra, which composed a sizable part of the Kaska territory, successive rock piles served as guides. River valleys were commonly referred to in giving

[9] Morice, *Carrier Language* (1932), 62. Lantis describes a similar "snowshoe stick" in use among the Nunivak Eskimo. (Lantis, *Social Culture of the Nunivak Eskimo* [1946], 167.) While informants among the Attawapiskat Cree Indians of James Bay denied the use of snowshoe pegs or the snowshoe staff the counterpart of the latter may have existed in "crossbars" with a wishbone lower end. These allowed bare persons to support themselves on snow. Honigmann, *Attawapiskat field notes* (1947-48).

[Erratum. Probably meant "name" – Analyst]

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

verbal directions.[*] Separated groups of travelers who had need to communicate with each other did so by means of a limited repertory of smoke signals like these: One smoke, "we have killed game"; two smokes, "come over here"; three or four smokes, "we have had an accident (or trouble)."

Men and women packed goods but characteristically women carried the heavier loads. Only lines were utilized in packing, pack sticks being unknown. Pack lines consisted of four-ply braided babiche line. In supporting a back load the line passed along the outside of the arms below the shoulders and proceeded around the top of the head slightly in front of the vertex. If a heavy load caused pack lines to slip down the arms, a padding of moss was added. Men carried small game by tying one end of a packline around the head and the other around the rear legs of the animal. Fowl were transported in sacks of fine, netted babiche lined with babiche hide. Tanned skin bags up to three feet square held clothing and meat in transport. The colon of an animal, closed at one end by sewing, provided a handy container for small tools. Berries and meat were held for short periods in birch-bark baskets. Dogs rarely packed goods prior to European contact. In the spring a pack dog's feet could be protected from crusted snow by moose-skin dog shoes in which small holes allowed the claws to project. Horses remained unseen until 1898.

In the absence of bark-chair baby carriers a woman transported her infant in a moose-skin bag lined with deep moss, the baby facing away from the mother. The bag hung against the mother's back supported by tanned-skin line. In winter a layer of fur lined the moss bag and insulated the child from the bitter cold. Following infancy children rode pick-a-back fashion on the mother's back, supported with a baby strap that passed around the outside of the woman's arms and was tied under her chin. A shawl of animal pelts, tanned with the hair on, provided protection from low temperature.

Several early travelers have remarked on the casual use of water transportation in the early post-contact period. Thus McConnell reports that the Indians "are very inferior canoemen, and are afraid to venture on the river except in its smoothest places. They seldom ascend the river with canoes, as they prefer to carry their outfits along the shore to tracking a boat against a rapid current, and in descending use small spruce bark canoes which they build in a couple of hours and abandon without much loss."[**] Pike writes, "the Cascas and Liard Indians are poor boatmen, and do not make much use of the waterways, preferring to pack heavy loads through the woods to working a canoe upstream; while, if they wish to run down a river, they can make a bark or skin canoe in a few hours, and lose nothing by throwing it away at the end of the run. The birch on the Upper Liard does not grow to a sufficient size to supply bark suitable for canoes so much used on the lower part of the river."[***]

[*] Among the Chilkat Tlingit there were true cardinal directions that took their names from the winds. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 204.

[**] McConnell, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon and Mackenzie Basins* (1890), 35D.

[***] Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896), 81-82. Along the Petly River this author "often noticed paths tied upon the banks, evidently used by the Indians for crossing. . . . It is curious that they do not use canoes on such easily navigable streams, but prefer to pack a load on their backs and make a straight course for their hunting-grounds, crossing and recrossing the main stream to cut off a detour" (204).

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Dease River

vehicle. Women as well as men drew the toboggans, a harness for this purpose consisting of one moose-hide line passing around the outside of the arms and around the chest while another cord passed over the top of the head.

Snowshoe types included the round or Loucheux style (said to have been preferable because of its lighter weight) as well as the pointed variety. Function determined the length of these appliances, long shoes being best adapted for a hunter's swift travel in deep snow. Small shoes served well to break trail for a toboggan. In case of emergency a man made temporary snowshoes by bending and lashing a willow pole, which he then filled with heavy babiche line. Children usually employed such crude snowshoes throughout the winter. The customary division of labor appeared, a man constructing the framework while a woman applied the filling. Bone snowshoe needles contained a concave depression at one end that served to push the line between closely laid strands of filling.

In any season the order to travel required men to walk ahead of women, a pattern that allowed them to break trail for the women and children. Blazes consisted of willow and other branches broken in the direction taken. Sometimes men hung moss in the branches of a tree, laid down stones to indicate a course, or cut the trunks of trees with a caribou-horn adz. A single tree felled by fire provided a convenient bridge. Occasionally more complex spans containing a number of poles provided safer means for crossing a stream. The tump line facilitated packing and pack sticks remained unknown. Baby packs consisted of tanned skin padded with moss. In this container the child faced away from the mother. When old enough to leave the moss bag a youngster rode facing the mother on the latter's back supported by a baby strap that was passed around the outside of the arms and tied in front of the woman's breast. Such belts were often decorated with porcupine-quill embroidery. Bark baby carriers were not made.

For communication between traveling groups, the Indians sometimes made use of smoke signals, a single smoke calling attention to a game kill. Also runners might be sent to invite people to the scene of a kill, young men being able to cover 20 miles by running in a single day. Picture writing or drum language were both lacking.

For water transportation the Dease River people relied on rafts, moose-skin boats (which occasionally reached a length of 20 feet), dugouts, and spruce-bark canoes. A raft contained the necessary number of poles lashed to crosspieces with tanned-skin line. Pointing the bow gave the craft greater speed. An earthen fireplace was often situated somewhat forward on a pointed raft, but people invariably spent nights on shore in the course of traveling. Two varieties of spruce-bark canoes may be distinguished, small vessels serving one or two hunters and larger boats for traveling. The bark was sewn to the framework with spruce root line. Decked canoes, sails, or canoes traveling in pairs could not be recalled for the pre-contact period. Men cut paddles from spruce wood. Rounded handles were denied for these implements, the informant claiming that the upper end of the shaft contained a crosspiece on which the canoer fastened his grip. Such crutch-like handles must have resembled the type in use on the Northwest Coast. A ridge was left on the center of the blade, the edges of which might be decorated with notches burned into the wood.